

MINUTES OF THE
NEBRASKA NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 19, 1998

Vince Kramper, Chair	Steve Chick
Wayne Davis, Vice-Chair	Dayle Williamson, Director
Roy Stewart, Member	Jim Cook, Staff
Dale Watermeier, Member	Terry Kubicek, Staff
Joseph Hergott, Member	Gayle Starr, Staff
Richard Jiskra, Member	Jill Richters, Staff
Mike Shaughnessy, Member	Karen Kuster, Staff
Richard Mercer, Member	Tom Pesek, Staff
Clifford Welsh, Member	
LeRoy Pieper, Member	
Frank Bartak, Member	
Glen Kroese, Member	

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Commission Chair, Vince Kramper, at 10:30 a.m. in the Lower Level Conference Room of the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Office Building in Lincoln, Nebraska.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Public notice of the meeting was placed in the LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR on March 11, 1998, notifying the public of the meeting.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL

The following items of informational material were distributed during the course of the meeting and a copy of each is attached to the file copy of the minutes:

1. Natural Resources Conservation Service Report to the Natural Resources Commission and Nebraska Association of Resources Districts - March 19, 1998
2. Nebraska Resources Development Fund Present Financial Status - March 17, 1998
3. DNR Recommendation on the Powder Creek Project
4. DNR Recommendation on the Wakefield Levee Project
5. Letter from Nemaha NRD Requesting Change in Project Allocation and Obligation on Upper Little Nemaha Watershed Project
6. Letter from Lower Platte North Natural Resources District Requesting Revision of NRDF Allocation for Skull Creek Structure Site #55
7. Status of Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund - March 17, 1998
8. Soil and Water Conservation Program Fund Report
9. Natural Resources Enhancement Fund Distribution - March 1998
10. Nebraska Water Well Decommissioning Fund Report
11. Nebraska Natural Resources Commission State of Nebraska 1997 County Population Estimates

12. Nebraska Natural Resources Commission State of Nebraska Digital Orthophoto Quarter
Quadrangles (DOQQ's) Production Schedule - March 16, 1998

MINUTES

Kramper pointed out that he had abstained on the motion to elect the Commission Chair. Stewart noted that he had called for nominations for the position of Commission Vice-Chair. Motion was made by Davis and seconded by Mercer to approve the minutes of the January 29, 1998, Commission meeting as corrected. Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: Kroese, Hergott, Jiskra, Watermeier, Mercer, Welsh, Davis, Pieper, Bartak, Stewart, and Kramper

Nay: None

Not Present: Shaughnessy, Larson, Roberts, Nelson, Donaldson

EXPENDITURES

Motion was made by Jiskra and seconded by Davis to approve the expenditures report for January and February, 1998, as distributed. Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: Hergott, Jiskra, Watermeier, Mercer, Welsh, Davis, Pieper, Bartak, Stewart, Kroese, and Kramper

Nay: None

Not Present: Shaughnessy, Larson, Roberts, Nelson Donaldson

ADVISOR'S COMMENTS

Steve Chick announced that the South Central RC&D application has been approved at the national office. There were two other applications from Nebraska, the Loess Hills and Trailblazer RC&Ds. He commented on the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Plan (WHIP) and the Buffer Strip Practice. In regard to the P.L. 566 Program, he said it appears there may be FY 98 construction funds available for Aowa Creek Site 43-9A and a site in the Middle Big Nemaha Watershed Project. He explained that the Aowa Creek Watershed is low on the regional priority list but will receive funds under another element of the distributing formula. For FY 99 it appears construction funds may be available for a site in Middle Big Nemaha. The administration's budget for FY 99 includes \$50 million for construction with part of that in the form of a loan. He noted that in conjunction with the NARD tour to Washington, D.C., there will be a meeting regarding the status of the P.L. 566 Watershed Program on March 24th and he urged Nebraska representatives to attend. He also commented that he had attended the NACD convention in Nashville.

REPORT ON NACD CONVENTION

Vince Kramper showed several slides of the NACD Convention that was held in Nashville, Tennessee, and was very well attended. A speaker at the conference noted that only 10% of the family budget in the United States is currently for food; whereas, 50 years ago it was approximately 40%. Discussion followed regarding the convention.

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

Dick Mercer reported that over \$24 million has been allocated from the Environmental Trust for projects in the state thus far. He said the Legislature is not going to redirect funds from the Environmental Trust Program this year, and noted that a meeting will be held at the Center for Continuing Education in April on ideas to improve the program. He also commented that the Review Committee has a difficult job and there are a great number of worthy projects to consider.

PLATTE RIVER ACTIVITIES

Jim Cook reported that the trial with Wyoming regarding the North Platte River will begin soon in February 1999 and will probably last through a good portion of that year. Five meetings have been held in Nebraska on the Environmental Impact Scoping Process relative to the MOA. The meetings were held at Scottsbluff, North Platte, Kearney, Grand Island and Lincoln with the best attendance at Kearney and Grand Island. Similar meetings will also be held in Wyoming and Colorado. He also noted that the Governance Committee will meet next week in Kearney. The Nebraska Land Committee has a meeting in Grand Island tonight and Jim Lundgren and Dr. Joe Jeffrey are co-chairs of that committee. Cook also reported that 8 counties in central Nebraska along the Platte River are considering a coalition with Nebraskans First to become involved in activities relating to the MOA. They will have a meeting in Kearney on March 20, 1998, and it may be open to the public.

Cook commented on the cooperative hydrology study that involves five NRDs above Columbus, NPPD, and Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District, three state agencies, including NRC, along with water users and environmental groups in Nebraska. He noted that an Environmental Trust grant of \$450,000 has been awarded to the study this year.

Stewart asked about the current status of the American Heritage Rivers Program and Williamson reported that Congress did not provide funding for the program, but he was unsure of its present status. Cook commented that the program was voluntary and included no federal restrictions. However, some feel that such restrictions could arise in the future.

1085 COMMITTEE

Kramper reported that questionnaires were received from 31% of the 521 Nebraska municipalities that were surveyed. He commented that many of the communities asked what NRDs have to offer and this is something that the NRDs need to respond to. The committee will meet again in April.

LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE

Frank Bartak called on Jim Cook who explained that LB 1154, the Buffer Strip Bill is out of committee and would be funded by a \$60 registration fee on each of the seven thousand different pesticides that are used in the state. The Department of Agriculture would administer the program assisted by the NRDs. This is a priority bill and as drafted it can be matched up with CRP assistance. Cook also commented that LR 45CA involves five separate items including mergers of cities and counties. One item that is of particular concern to the NRDs is the reallocation of motor vehicle taxes to selected local subdivisions of government, excluding NRDs and some other local subdivisions. Cook also pointed out that an extra \$250,000 has been proposed for the Resources Development Fund in the current FY 98 budget and if this is unused, it would carryover to FY 99.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Richard Jiskra indicated that Tom Pesek had reviewed the Resources Development Fund status report with the committee. Jiskra reported that the Director of Natural Resources' recommendations on the Powder Creek Project and the Wakefield Levee Project had been distributed and that the Commission would be acting on these recommendations at its April meeting. He also noted that a delegation of Commission members is to tour the two projects before the April meeting and the three-member committee of Kramper, Bartak, and Mercer will be submitting their recommendation to the Program Committee regarding funding for these projects.

Jiskra reported that Paul Rohrbaugh of the Nemaha NRD had reviewed his NRD's request

for a change in the allocation for the Upper Little Nemaha Watershed Project. Motion was made by Jiskra and seconded by Bartak that the Commission reduce the amount of NRDF funds allocated and obligated to Component #11 (Design of Dams 42, 50, and 63) of the Upper Little Nemaha Watershed Project by \$33,466.87 from \$78,750.00 to \$45,283.13 effective immediately. Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: Jiskra, Watermeier, Mercer, Welsh, Davis, Pieper, Bartak, Stewart, Kroese, Hergott, and Kramper

Nay: None

Not Present: Shaughnessy, Larson, Roberts, Nelson Donaldson

Jiskra noted that Tom Mountford of the Lower Platte North NRD had briefed the Commission on the current status of the Skull Creek Site 55 Project. The project has a rate-of-return of 4.8% and the NRD is continuing its efforts to increase the level of land treatment above the reservoir site. This project will also be acted on at the April meeting.

Jiskra noted that the status reports on the Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund, the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund, the Natural Resources Enhancement Fund, and the Water Well Decommissioning Fund had been provided to Commission members.

Motion was made by Jiskra and seconded by Davis that the Commission allow NRDs to use NSWCP funds for cost-share on buried pipelines to surge valves as part of the irrigation water management practice. Motion carried unanimously.

Aye: Watermeier, Mercer, Welsh, Davis, Pieper, Bartak, Stewart, Kroese, Hergott, Jiskra, and Kramper

Nay: None

Not Present: Shaughnessy, Larson, Roberts, Nelson Donaldson

Bartak asked if this approved practice would qualify for Enhancement Funds assistance as well. Cook responded that it would be necessary to present this question in writing along with the argument for doing so and that in order for any practice to be approved for Enhancement Fund assistance it has to be water quality related.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Terry Kubicek reviewed the status of the Soil Survey activities, the Data Bank activities, and the Comprehensive Planning Activities. He noted that Steve McMaster was introduced as a new member of the Planning Staff at the Comprehensive Planning Committee Meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Commission is April 29 and 30, 1998, in Lincoln. The NRDF Project Priority Special Meeting will be held on April 29th. Dayle Williamson noted that Mike Shaughnessy and Gayle Starr will be attending the NARD Tour to Washington, D.C. and he commented that Gayle Starr is on his way to the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting to provide capacity building instruction.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:45 a.m.

Chairman

Director of Natural Resources